



UNDER  
**ONE**  
ROOF

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JUNE 12, 2003

A HOUSING  
SUMMIT REPORT

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## INTRODUCTION

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An interesting collection of people attended an unusual meeting in February 2003, with the goal of addressing the challenges of affordable housing in Chester County - and elsewhere. Closely tied to other national problems connected with sprawl, the need for affordable housing is attracting increased attention but few practical, down to earth solutions. The newly formed committee represented organizations without a previous history of sitting at the same table, yet everyone dealt with issues affecting the future of housing in Chester County on a daily basis.. The meeting produced unanimous agreement to serve as planners and sponsors for a housing summit. The questions they would address over the course of several sessions were daunting. How can this extremely wealthy county experiencing heavy pressures for development best address the needs of its current and future residents in a manner that protects its much-lauded quality of life? How can we avoid the erosion of the very elements that have made it so attractive a destination for living, working and retiring? Will the problems associated with sprawl prove insurmountable?

Shortly after the initial meeting, a commentary page in the Philadelphia Inquirer expressed the challenges facing the committee:

“Sprawl is a well-worn and fully frustrating word. It creates visions of houses in the midst of farmland, the sameness of shopping centers bracketing towns and country villages, bumper to bumper traffic on major highways and increasing congestion on narrow, winding back roads. Only a few months into a new year, planning commissions, county government, municipal officials and proponents of farmland and open space preservation are wrestling with urban sprawl’s far-reaching implications. The once certain sense of bucolic Chester County being too far out, too inconvenient for commuting has vanished in a dramatic wave of increasing population. There isn’t a single profit-making or non-profit organization dealing with the accompanying housing issues that doesn’t encounter delays, increased costs and an absence of understanding among those most affected by municipal decisions. The many players in the housing drama will come together for a summit meeting - Under One Roof -on June 12 ,2003. As they work toward viable answers in dealing with housing needs, all ideas are acceptable, and no one comes to the table labeled as the bad guy.

“The Chester County 2020 Trust and the Chester County Community Foundation recently released a study funded by the William Penn Foundation that focused on the attitudes that produce sprawl. And it is indeed attitude that accounts for many of the headaches. New residents arrive to fulfill a dream - large lots, larger houses, a quiet existence far from the problems of the cities and inner ring suburbs. The trade-off becomes a car-dependent existence, traffic jams and rising school taxes. As land prices escalate, the developers look even

farther from the town centers for reasonably priced properties - complicating the neighboring farmer's existence when home buyers discover that cows next door are hardly as appealing in person as on postcards. None of these challenges can be effectively addressed until the players in the housing game find it plausible to sit down at the same table, search for common ground and attempt to understand and balance the needs of the individual communities. The burgeoning population must be housed, but not in a manner that destroys the very elements that make this or the other regional counties appealing. Hopefully, the shared mission will evolve as preservation of the best of Chester County, while maintaining a healthy balance of economic vitality and generational, ethnic and cultural diversity.

"The long-time patterns of gradual community expansion has increasingly been replaced by the virtually overnight appearance of dozens or even hundreds of houses, many of them look-alike developments lacking any attachment to a specific town or borough. Populations are divided by housing price and the desire to live around people "just like me." With development comes controversy. Even as visionary developers favor a return to neo-traditional designs, they encounter objections about construction of homes less expensive than their neighbors - perceived as a threat to value of existing homes — against village and town extensions with greater density that might add children to the school district. The idea of walkable communities combining residential with retail uses and allowing easy access to the library or post office seems appealing until a formal proposal is put on the table. And yet these are the designs that supply entry level workers, young families and senior citizens who want to downsize with truly affordable housing. Residents who do find these initiatives both attractive and practical discover it difficult if not impossible to summon the courage to stand up in a public meeting to say "what a great idea."

"Guided by and answering to Pennsylvania's complicated Municipal Planning Code, their challenges multiply, vastly extending the hours spent dealing with developers, planners, lawyers, traffic consultants and the rest of the cast upon which every new residential development and the equally ubiquitous shopping centers and mega-stores depends. Next time you are tempted to criticize local officials, take a good look at the incredible quantity of hours they contribute to keeping each community a safe, attractive place to live.

"A strong representation of Chester County municipal officials is crucial to the success of Under One Roof, for they play a decisive role in the sprawl story. A single evening of open discussion won't produce an entire menu of agreed upon answers, but it should generate better understanding and an inclination to work cooperatively. Pie in the sky? Maybe - but certainly worth a try. One productive summit can lead to others, each one a building block for more sustainable communities and ongoing, active involvement and communication at every level."

Under One Roof not only demonstrated that the disparate elements of the housing providers are capable of establishing lines of communication, but also uncovered surprising areas of common ground. The scene was set at the opening session with presentations by the Chester County Commissioners, Robert Bobincheck of Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, and Liberty Property Trust's CEO, William P. Hankowsky. Without exception, in bringing individual experience and understanding to the topic, the speakers challenged the audience to think constructively about the issues driving sprawl in even the most rural municipalities in the county.

Commissioners' Chair, Colin Hanna, spoke via a videotape made before he left for his son's wedding in North Carolina. He stressed the importance of affordable housing in sustaining both the economic base and a good solid social base in the county - emphasizing the inadequate fresh stock of homes in the affordable range. "The market exists, and we need to fill it if we want to preserve the quality of life as we know and appreciate it in Chester County."

Karen Martynick echoed her fellow commissioners' concerns about the future of the best-educated, wealthiest county in the state - and the only one with a county-wide comprehensive plan. She provided examples to illustrate that what we may consider new-built density Chester-County-style fails the affordable housing test. Even though buyers may feel they have a right to housing where they want it, when they want it, it is unrealistic to cover every township with high ticket houses. The market for affordable houses is so high that those currently under construction are sold as soon as the foundations rise out of the ground. She explained that important components of Landscapes and the county's funding programs provide incentives for revitalization, and infrastructure improvements. Martynick looks forward to the establishment of incentives similar to those already in place for low income housing to help improve the supply of much needed affordable housing.

Commissioner Andy Dinniman reviewed the gains in open space and farmland preservation - 27,000 acres currently — and the goal of ultimately preserving 40% of Chester County's open land. Equally important is the \$12.5 million of Landscapes funding that has gone to revitalization and infrastructure growth. Landscapes is a fully comprehensive document, with serious focus on housing and public services, casting the commissioners in roles that have them working directly with the housing agencies and non-profit housing providers. He mentioned Las Rosas, the landmark housing product in Kennett Square - 16 new units where the county and state have come together with financial support. Dinniman challenged the audience to work to increase support for the workers who serve the companies that in turn contribute to the County's prosperity. An adequate supply of affordable homes is in the best interest of every resident.

Robert Bobincheck stayed until the last group report was presented, just after 10 p.m.. He joined a breakout session and also managed to talk to many other "delegates." His enthusiasm about a recent PHFA commitment was contagious as he described the agency's \$1.6 million backing for construction of 61 housing units in Coatesville for a mixed income community. The funding was a 1 to 1 match, with the city providing another \$1.6 million. Bob invited the audience to give him a call, or at least to check in with the agency's website for information about the menu of programs: [www.phfa.org](http://www.phfa.org).

Chester County Economic Development Council's Gary Smith introduced the keynote speaker, William P. Hankowsky, President of Liberty Property Trust. A reverse commuter who lives in Philadelphia, Bill Hankowsky minced no words in describing the Delaware Valley as existing on a bad diet of no growth. He compared sprawl to a poison ivy itch, spreading where we don't want it. For him, Under One Roof was important not only to Chester County, but to the entire Philadelphia region that is itself badly out of shape. He urged the audience not to think in a vacuum but to develop ideas and scenarios for the future that could be applied everywhere in the region. As an example, he mentioned the policy in England where it is a requirement that every development include essential worker housing as a cost of doing business. Essential workers are defined as the people needed for a viable, sustainable community - the policemen, fire fighters, emergency medical technicians, nurses, teachers and all others who provide essential services.

His statistics went right to the point: From 1982 to 1997, development in the region - including housing, retail and commercial — increased by 33%, while the population grew only 3%. Philadelphia saw no growth in office space in 1997 to 2002. Contrast that figure with the suburbs' 89% office growth - but no substantial affordable housing to go with it.

Hankowsky asked his audience to think hard about the 150,000 retiring baby boomers who were right around the corner, will be looking to downsize and eventually find affordable housing. Looking at the five counties and 238 municipal entities that comprise the Philadelphia region, there is no lack of affordable housing except for the fact that it is in wrong locations. The region has no edge cities; there has been no density growth. As the economy renews itself and there is a burst of job growth - perhaps five years out - what will Chester County do? The opportunity exists to look ahead, to solve today's housing problems and minimize potential problems for the future. Companies place a high priority on the quality of life available to their work force. If that quality diminishes, they may not pack up and leave, but they will stop growing here. As of today, our region has under performed in population growth and job creation.

According to Hankowsky, these challenges are not the Philadelphia region's alone. Sprawl and scarcity of affordable housing are multi-state problems. Reduction in growth leads to revenue shortfall that in turn affects the quality of services, most importantly education, and so the snowball grows — pulling residents out of the cities and into the suburbs and beyond. Infill in the urban areas is crucial. Otherwise, the wrong incomes are married to the wrong locations and the wrong housing. The most dramatic, effective weapons solution is to go regional in planning and cooperation. Draw a big circle around the entire problem, and bring the players together - in much the same way that Under One Roof brought everyone together. Chester County does not have a crisis today, but it is right around the corner. The housing system needs constant, productive attention - beginning now. Multi-jurisdictional planning can produce valid long term perspectives. In Bill Hankowsky's opinion, the highest priority topics are tax reform and rebirth of the cities. Changes are inevitable. The choice is there — control or no control.

Following the opening session, the participants adjourned to the ballroom and a light supper. Seating was arranged so that the groups could spend the time getting to know one another and begin dealing with issues. The seventeen breakout groups were carefully structured to reflect the wide range of constituencies and experience. Bonding within the groups went so well that several requests over the p.a. system were required to move them on to the classrooms.





## ISSUES

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*The list of issues used as the basis for the breakout sessions was developed over several planning meetings. Every issue is an integral component of sprawl.*

### Trends contributing to sprawl include:

- Increased traffic.
  - Zoning toward larger lot size.
  - Increase in the cost of land.
  - Unwillingness to accept higher density.
  - Spatial segregation and affordability.
  - Age-restricted communities.
  - Dispersion of employment.
  - All the things we're doing to avoid sprawl are creating more sprawl.
  - Absence of access to public water and sewer.
  - Environmental issues and restrictions.
  - Increase in fees and other municipal costs.
  - Lack of understanding of the issues by public officials.
  - Little or no education available for the supervisors and planning commissions.
- Forum participants were asked to choose the five issues they consider most important, identifying them with colored dots (no more than one dot per person, per issue). Individual dot colors were assigned to municipal officials, professional planners, business community, non-profit agencies/developers, municipal planners, developers/builders and regional representa-

tives who might or might not wear more than one hat. Of 184 who were present at the opening session, approximately 109 are represented in the issue responses, with a breakdown of "votes" within each issue. The responses below represent the totals for the 15 highest ranked issues. The remaining issues attracted 1 or 2 votes apiece. The full chart of responses appears in the Appendix.

The following results are prioritized by the number of dots:

1. Land consumption far in excess of population growth was of concern to 38, with professional planners (11), municipal officials (9) and non-profit entities involved with housing (8) giving them highest priority. The developer/builder category did not weigh in on this issue.
2. Zoning laws (30) attracted varying degrees of concern. They rated highest with the professional planners, the non-profit and business communities.
3. Skepticism regarding the understanding of the general public about the value of clusters and villages (28) was reflected in the responses from professional planners (8), non-profits (5), regional representatives (5), and municipal officials (4).
4. Job location vs. housing location (27) and the allied problems of transportation and brain drain attracted response from the business community (7), municipal planners (5), with 4 each for municipal planners and professional planners.
5. Mixed use including affordable housing (26) as an issue scored high with the municipal officials (7), professional planners and non-profits (5 each).
6. Bias against high density (25) concerned the non-profits, developer/builder, and regional representatives all with 5, and the business community at 4.
7. Nimbyism (25) was a serious issue for municipal officials (5), professional planners (4), and developer/builders (4).
8. Multi-municipal cooperation (23) attracted attention from professional planners (4), business community (6), non-profit entities (5) and municipal planners (3).

9. Development infrastructure needs (20) found common ground among all the groups with 2's and 3's except for the business community (6).
  10. Cost of land and infrastructure (19) found the developer/builders (5) and the non-profits (4) most concerned with the other groups weighing in with 3's and a 1.
  11. Traffic (15) drew response from municipal officials (4), professional planners (3), municipal planners (5) and regional representatives (3).
  12. The disconnect between housing types and affordability (13) merited attention from the professional planners (7) and the non-profits (3), less from the business community (1), municipal planners (1) and the regional representatives. Neither the municipal officials nor the developer/builders weighed in on this issue.
  13. The environmental impact of development scored highest (13) for the municipal officials and professional planners.
  14. "Fulfilling the comprehensive goals of Landscapes - respecting the balance between open space/farm-land preservation and livable communities" picked up 13 dots, pretty much across the board but interestingly none of those were from the municipal officials. Perhaps, having committed their municipalities to the cooperative relationship with Landscapes, they find it a non-issue. (Only Schuylkill Township remains outside Landscapes.)
  15. Livable communities attracted 13 dots, sharing interest from municipalities and professional planners.
- Professional planners responded to the opportunities of land planning, land conservation and the success of the neo-traditional communities in other places. They tend to be frustrated by nimbys, support the concept of mixed use, struggle with zoning laws, fair share and the skepticism about density in any form. Multi-municipal cooperation is high on their wish list as is a better relationship between housing types and affordability. Allied major concerns center on transportation and the "brain drain."
  - The business community was concerned about land consumption and zoning laws, transportation and the "brain drain" attracted the most dots. Their choice of issues also reflected concerns about housing for employees and the possible dearth of sites for new or expanded business opportunities.
  - The non-profit housing providers focused on land consumption, zoning, resistance to clusters, other density provisions, mixed use, nimbyism, and multi-municipal cooperation.
  - Municipal planners identified their greatest areas of concern as the role of agriculture, public school costs and attitudes, traffic, and the problems of transportation that impact the "brain drain."
  - Developers and builders targeted land costs and infrastructure, as well as mixed use, zoning laws and regulatory costs.
  - Regional representatives who came from broad areas of volunteer and professional interest, zeroed in on land consumption, zoning laws, the questions of clusters and density, mixed uses, the bias against higher density, nimbyism, and development infrastructure needs.

**The serious concerns for each constituency are evident.**

- Municipal officials struggle with the challenges of land consumption which drive the efforts around livable communities, dealing with nimbys and hoping for better means of educating and bringing out the rest of the community, fulfilling environmental goals and regulations and thinking hard about the quality of life and high quality education.

**SEEKING COMMON GROUND AND SOLUTIONS**

*The next step was to put the seventeen groups to work. In an exercise of this type, attitude is everything. The rules of engagement were simple.*



## GROUND RULES

Listen to Each Other

All Ideas Are Valid

Write All Ideas on Flip-Chart

Observe Time Frames

Seek Common Ground and Action

Differences and Problems are Acknowledged -  
but Not Debated

## Tasks

1. Consider the major issues identified by the dot exercise.
2. Identify the players in addressing each issue. What values do you want to see preserved?
3. How do you see the various players working together?
4. What types of housing should be provided? Where?
5. What contributions can each player make toward strengthening a sense of community?
6. Create a preferred future for the County and its residents.
7. List the anticipated accomplishments/benefits of your plan.
8. List the anticipated barriers that must be overcome and the opportunities that are available to deal with them.

It was interesting to observe the manner in which the various groups approached the five top issues. Some worked with all five, with others choosing to concentrate on one or two. The styles of the reports were different, but the dialogue was open and fully productive. The groups returned to the auditorium at 9 p.m. with their reporters ready to share the scenarios for the future of the county. The range of thought provided plenty of common ground at the same time that it generated topics, and definitely challenges, for additional forums.

The content of the reports appears as Observations/Conclusions, Barriers, and Recommendations.

## OBSERVATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

*As the group reports were presented, certain issues attracted more attention than others. Considerable agreement across the various constituencies led to a lengthy list of solutions that merit consideration in working toward better planning and more effective cooperation at every level.*

## Common Ground

- Virtually everyone wants to preserve Chester County's quality of life and, for the residents, good schools and safe neighborhoods top the list. These goals do not require sprawl as a building pattern.
- There is unmet need for work force and essential worker housing.
- Higher density residential units make sense near existing infrastructure - roadways, sewer and water. They can be apartments, condominiums and townhouses - with mixed use for community vitality. (Observe the new initiatives in Coatesville.)
- Regional planning must be realistic and economically feasible.
- Sustainability is important: desirable place, solid/steady, ownership of space and idea.
- All the players need to understand and accept the desired outcomes and be willing to make compromises. The desire for partnership has to come from all the players.

## Pervasive Questions and Challenges

- Affordable housing needs cut across age groups, economic capability and housing types. Affordable housing has many definitions that contribute to the difficulty of arriving on the same page.



- What is the agreed upon definition of affordable housing. Is it tied to the price of the product or the income level? Why is it needed? Must the location be close enough to allow manageable access to things in people's lives - work, shopping, education, places of worship, etc.?
- Isn't this really all about reinventing how we build?
- Blame for sprawl and the absence of diverse housing should be shared by all those involved.
- There is tremendous need for work force and essential worker housing.

## Zoning

- Perhaps the most frequent observation was that zoning laws need re-examination and change to reflect the "new reality." Within this topic, it was felt that state legislators need to develop the political courage to delegate authority to the counties where there is intimate knowledge of the problems, strengths and weaknesses of their regions.
- In most municipalities, the zoning ordinances are driving lot size, requiring the current large lot development which is consuming land in the suburbs.
- Municipalities need to be more creative. The conditional use process is too costly. Developing the right mix of housing "by right" can be accomplished more easily - for everyone.
- It will take more political courage at the local level to make the hard decisions about zoning.
- Zoning needs to be more progressive to create housing in existing urban areas.
- Corporate development has more recognizable give-backs than residential development.
- It is important to retain industrial zoning to keep local jobs.

## Economic

- Builders will build to market value. There is a big market for affordable housing, and some of them are beginning to realize that. As they try to fulfill the needs and desires of home buyers, they need to recognize and respond to the broad range of those needs and wants.
- One group came up with the following equation to show just how much it might cost a family earning \$60,000 to purchase a home:  $\$60,000 \text{ income} \times 30\% = \$18,000/12 = \$1,500/\text{month} - \$500 \text{ (taxes)} = \$1,000/\text{month mortgage payment} = \$160,000 \text{ home.}$
- Mixed use development seems to have increasing appeal.
- Chester County's blooming economy will be in big trouble if we don't develop diversity in housing. And that means in the range below affordable, too - where Habitat, the Housing Partnership and Alliance for Better Housing work. Their homeowners have a solid track record for financial responsibility, if they can find an affordable home.
- Market prices are driven by perception - the right neighborhood, the right school district.
- Financial institutions are comfortable with single-family dwellings. Encourage them to broaden their horizons.
- Succeeding today in competitive market requires concern about change.

## Education

- Growing interest in more cohesive, economically integrated communities is surfacing at the same time that educating the general public to the benefits is a major challenge.
- It is time to recognize that land owners, municipal officials, developers and professional planners have more to gain from cooperation than an adversarial relationship.

- Nimbys were defined as normally nice people who haven't bothered to find out what their new community is all about. Now that they are here, they don't want to share the treasure they have found.
- Everyone can benefit from education. We assume we know when we don't know at all.
- There is a lack of understanding about the value of villages and clusters.
- Why are we able to drive through a community and know its economics by looking at the houses? Segregation by income?
- West Vincent, courageous supervisors. Looked at all the possibilities, apartments traded for 85% open space. Public protest overcome.

### **Regional, County, and Municipal Planning**

- There were a couple of requests for a "toolbox" that would allow the planners to give and take with the developers. If all the answers were so easy - for the Chester County Planning Commission staff already offers an excellent toolbox. The only requirement is to open it.
- Regionalization of municipal services was seen as a win-win situation.
- Preservation of open space and farmland requires trade-offs. Revitalization of existing communities is part of the process.
- The best sprawl fighting weapon is regional planning and zoning.
- It's time to clarify growth boundaries and set policy accordingly.
- How do you deal with unified building code vs. historic preservation vs. homogenization?
- View sheds need active and passive recreation.
- Office development forces additional parking (without mass transportation)
- Help shape the discussion. Take people out to see good practices.
- Municipalities doing well with open space planning, but rarely with affordable/density.

### **Partnerships**

- Cooperation is a very good option, takes less energy and is far less costly than battling. It requires strong leadership.
- Corporate partnerships in housing can work wonders things. Look at Astra-Zeneca and University of Pennsylvania helping their work force with a local housing supply.

### **Government Intervention/Incentives/Policy Changes**

- There has to be a way to effectively transfer development rights, without creating a dichotomy of happy sellers and unhappy receivers. This is similar to the problem when a township rezones and some property owners feel their value has been diminished.
- Perception is all. Some of the housing summit participants felt there is no compelling reason for municipal intervention. Others felt government intervention is necessary to assist the process.
- Tax reform has a role in the sprawl picture.
- Hard to get traditional neighborhood designs past the municipality. How to sell to constituents?
- Political problem: High cost, low risk. Low cost, high risk.

### **General**

- Public servants who must live in the community where they work deserve secure, affordable housing.
- People won't walk short distances
- Absence of sidewalks equates with success (no sidewalks in upscale neighborhoods).
- Racism is an issue involving class and income.
- Some communities have image problems, like Coatesville, but are improving.

## BARRIERS

### Zoning

- Zoning laws too often inhibit innovation and flexibility. There is a scarcity of land that is zoned appropriately and can be developed into affordable housing.
- Height restrictions may be preventing effective moves toward density.
- Small town codes.
- Individual townships are down-zoning.

### Attitude

- Perhaps the biggest barrier to a creative, balanced approach to affordable housing is a community's fear of change. The status quo may not be ideal, but many think it better than the uncertainty of change.
- A passive public turns out after the municipal officials have completed a planning process or gone through hearings on a development proposal. The nimbys rule.
- Perception: schools, safety, "mine," neighborhoods, sense of place, "local control."
- Perception.
- People looking to buy houses are starry eyed about the size of the house.
- Narrow-mindedness.
- Bias.
- No municipality wants to be the "receiving" one.

### Education

- Lack of awareness and education about housing options and the positive role of diversity in a healthy community leads to a nimby mindset that makes the municipal officials' roles an exercise in frustration. Whatever they do, someone will not be happy.

### Government

- Micro-management at the municipal level.
- We can't legislate affordability.
- County policy: coordination-authority- advocacy
- Do municipalities (elected officials) want to solve the affordable housing problem?

### Transportation

- A literal roadblock. Transportation. Getting there.

### Economic considerations

- Low economic return.
- Unrealistic to think that we can control the market in such a way that it allows affordable housing in some areas?
- Market testing. If there is nothing to compare, often thought of as no market.
- Open space areas= increasing land costs
- Influx into Chester County creates major problems of supply and demand.
- Positive examples needed. Who's performing re higher density?
- Cost of sewage

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Partnerships

- Identify the players for they overlap: municipalities, developers, marketplace, financing, conservancy/land trust, major employers in region, public transportation, public at large. The target audience: young professionals, young families, middle income, seniors.
- Players working together: must be open-minded, have a passion for the need for affordable housing, be willing to compromise.
- Identify the types of housing and where: new home ownership starting at \$100,000: new home ownership/rehab of existing housing: cluster development with open space: rentals. Where: near existing town centers and new town centers, near stores, recreation, employment.

- Create a win-win situation for the builder, buyer and municipality.
- Encourage the re-use of existing housing stock. In each community, what will make the houses appealing, what are the incentives to invest - either as an individual homebuyer or as an economically capable developer?
- Builders and a subcommittee of the municipal officials should meet prior to any formal submission to discuss the impacts of the development and the desires of the township.
- Suggestions were made around Acts 67 & 68, considered a good start in terms of multi-municipal cooperation, but perhaps too dependent upon the comfort level of individual municipalities in seeking cooperative action. The incentives have to be strong enough to offset what might be viewed as giving up local control.
- Provide mixed use with a better balance among commercial, retail, and housing diversity by requiring projects that receive financial incentives from local, county, state and federal governments to create adjacent work force housing.

### **Education**

- Affordable housing advocates need spokespersons to get the word out, defuse the fear of diversity and change.

### **Developers**

- If developers want to build big houses, require a percentage supply of affordable development.
- Don't ghettoize affordable housing. Good people do live in smaller houses.
- Re-focus on boroughs and towns.
- Use the Fannie Mae housing package.
- Lower costs by building a planned community like Chesterbrook.
- Spend more on design to alleviate the pressures of high density.

### **Economic**

- Explore the potential for land banking. Who has the financial ability to purchase and hold land for affordable housing?
- Employers need to organize to promote affordable housing.
- Good modular building could help keep costs down..
- Look at housing as an industry, a source of employment and a means of strengthening trade schools and their product.
- Can there be covenants on sales to keep the prices from escalating out of the affordability category?
- Perhaps the only way to make affordable stay affordable is to interfere in the free market concept with deed restrictions, time limits for resale etc. With the American Dream of buying low and enjoying appreciation, how about a vesting period ( if sell in 3 years, get 40% of the profit, etc.)
- How about charitable donation- conservancy, in connection with land affordability, create county 501(c)3? You'd have tax credits-conservancy-incentives.

### **County and Municipal Officials, and Planning Commissions**

- Municipalities: tell the developers what you want!
- Remember, affordable housing could be your kids.
- Stop thinking that affordable housing has to be in a concentrated location. Historically, neighborhoods grew with a natural diversity of housing size. Smaller, more modest houses were found here or there — starter homes for young families or retirement living that kept seniors in a multi-generational environment.
- Make an effort to draw new residents in the community so they don't automatically join the ranks of the nimbys.

- The county and its municipalities need to work together to create incentives for appropriate housing development. The incentives could include density infrastructure, tied to price control.
- Vision of the future: stronger county control and everyone sits together at one meeting.
- The manner in which Kennett Township and Kennett Borough invited their residents to assist in actively planning for the future seems to have been a positive move. Encourage others to try it. (Both used the vision forum, similar to Under One Roof, as a planning tool.)
- Every new municipal official or member of a planning commission should have to take a basic course in planning and zoning.
- Work up truly creative zoning to increase density.
- Provide financial incentives to regional planning efforts for infrastructure - roads, water and sewer - for both employment center and adjacent or nearby residential creation.
- Offer incentives to encourage municipalities and regional planning commissions to add economic components to fair share requirements.
- How about a county planning benchmark based on "who's doing what with Act 67 & Act 68?"
- If we agree that Smart Growth is the #1 issue in the county, we need to discuss revenue sharing models that support this agenda item.
- Work on fast-track options for the permitting process. Reward the responsible builder.
- Let's go for the big picture, thinking outside our town walls.
- Municipalities must be willing to accept change.
- Reduce builders' costs for approval process and time frames, provide infrastructure where appropriate, to encourage the building more affordable housing. Remove low or "on-value" requirements and barriers.

- Accomplish true regional planning by transferring regulatory approval authority to the county in lieu of municipalities. The municipalities become an advisory board to the county.
- Real concern about senior citizens, where they live when they downsize, transportation problems, income to support taxes.
- Being open-minded with the business community, the product of a negotiated process.

### **Transportation**

- Improve the marketing of mass transit, show its convenience.
- Recognize that transportation is a major factor in determining where affordable housing should be built. Address opportunities within a transportation overlay area.

### **SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION**

*Determine the appropriate players for each initiative. Chester County 2020 is available as a convener where needed or desired.*

#### **Regional planning commissions.**

1. Convene discussions about affordable housing as a regional issue, not just a use that boroughs or cities must provide, or a use best suited for brownfield sites or adjacent to a commercial or industrial uses.

#### **Multi-interest groups, including municipal officials, planners and developers, and land trusts**

1. Develop a model for simplifying the entire permitting process, test it, and then replicate it.
2. Meet before the planning process begins to discuss the goals and opportunities.
3. Create housing inventory maps for municipalities. Address communities that "work" - analyze their strengths and create models for use in similar municipalities.

4. Explore means of bringing existing sprawl developments into stronger relationships with the parent community. Representation at municipal meetings, on committees, trails, transportation, mixed use, etc.
5. Develop an expanded list of incentives for good planning and easier permitting. "I'll help you if you can do this for me." Convene a win-win vision forum.
6. Develop support for a county-wide "seal of approval" that would recognize high level cooperation with municipalities and planning commissions as well as good individual development and revitalization plans.

Work with TDRs as an opportunity.

Work with the County to develop a housing policy.

Explore the potential for creating conservation easements that address housing purposes.

Address the facts, rather than the myths, about affordable housing.

### **Developers**

Explore establishment of a policy that pledges an affordable housing component for each new development and, when possible, in those already under construction. Create model ordinance language to facilitate density or procedural initiatives.

### **Education & Communication**

1. Support municipal officials by addressing the fears of diversity and density. How can they be defused? Are there specific approaches that respond to varied demographics. Create models that can be applied to most communities.
2. Reach the residents to involve them in determining the future of their community. One fledgling, though proven, means is the vision forum. Others?
3. Establish a continuing education requirement for municipal officials and planning commission members. Begin with the Master Planner seminars co-sponsored by West Chester University, the Chester County Planning Commission and Chester County 2020. Explore the potential of the APA seminars and workshops.

### **Transportation**

1. Focus on opportunities within a transportation overlay, focusing on transportation centers.

### **Economic development groups.**

1. Engage current and prospective employers to determine their needs. What are the salary ranges? What can their employees afford? What amenities must the prospective home communities supply - easy commuting, good schools, public transportation, open space, recreation, walkable scale etc.

### **Employers**

1. Consider new construction that includes a mixed use component on the corporate campus.

The Planning Committee's intention is to address the action items with support from community volunteers. Participants in the Under One Roof and other interested parties are welcome to join these exercises. Chester County 2020 will continue to serve as a clearing house for information and communication. Inquiries should be directed to Chester County 2020, 28 W. Market Street, West Chester, PA 19380. Phone: 610-696-3180. Fax: 610-696-4587. E-mail: info@CC2020.org

Under One Roof was the first step in a process of on-going dialogue and cooperation. We look forward to progress on all levels.



**Nancy L. Mohr**

*for the Planning Committee*

## Under One Roof Planning Committee

Chester County 2020 Trust

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Chester County Community Foundation

*Karen Simmons*

Chester County Commissioners

*Colin Hanna, Karen Martynick, Andrew Dinniman*

Chester County Planning Commission

*William Fulton, Wayne Clapp*

Chester County Department of Community Development

*Thomas McIntyre, Patrick Bokovitz*

Chester County Association of Township Officials

*Tom McCaffrey, Judy DiFilippo*

Chester County Chamber of Business & Industry

*Rob Powelson, Joe Viscuso*

Chester County Economic Development Council

*Gary Smith, Henry Thorne*

Home Builders Association of Chester/Delaware Counties

*Gary Koerner, Mark Mitman*

Housing Authority of the County of Chester

*Bert Dantzer*

Transportation Management Association of Chester County

*Mark Cassel*

The Housing Partnership of Chester County

*Nancy Frame, David Sweet*

Alliance for Better Housing

*Howard Porter*

Kendal-Crosslands Communities

*Richard Lysle*

Habitat for Humanity of Chester County

*Burt Rothenberger*

Brandywine Conservancy

*Sheila Fleming*

Natural Lands Trust

*Molly Morrison*

Liberty Property Trust

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*Cathy Palmquist*

